

# CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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## NYC

# BUILD WORKERS' POWER

**NEW YORK CITY, October 16** – The retired teachers chapter of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT)—70,000 retirees—scored an unprecedented victory in June when we overthrew the leadership of the chapter for the first time in its over 60-year history. The upset came as a result of a several-years-long struggle against privatizing cutbacks in our health insurance, a result of backroom deals between the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC), where the UFT is a dominant force, and the city.

The election victory brought national American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Randi Weingarten to New York to tell retirees: “We hear you. We will respond.” Only days later, the UFT withdrew its support for the program, Medicare (Dis)Advantage, that they themselves engineered! Why the sudden retreat? Weingarten and co. are terrified they might lose control of the union in the union-wide election scheduled for this coming spring. Communists and allies in the union have a crucial role to play in exposing the unions, and working inside them to build a multiracial movement for communist revolution and workers’ power.

### Unions are part of the capitalist apparatus

As part of a deal with the City bosses in 2018 to help fund the teachers’ contract, the MLC agreed to find \$600 million in additional healthcare savings each year!

Instead of organizing workers to fight for our needs, the union helped city bosses pass the costs onto the working class, resulting in this attack on retiree healthcare. That is the role of unions under capitalism: provide the appearance of fighting for workers while actually undermining our interests. For this reason, many workers are disgusted with unions, knowing they are frauds. But not uniting with other workers and fighting back is itself a fatal error.

### We gotta be in it to win it! The muck and mire of organizing

The only reason retirees got this far is because we have united with other workers and organized class

***We are struggling with workers to see that, at its root, it’s not just the privatization of our healthcare that is our enemy, it’s the capitalist system itself.***

struggle inside these unions. Members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have played a key role in this struggle, introducing communist concepts of antiracism, class consciousness, and workers’ unity. The struggle is long-range, so we must have a long-range outlook. And we have to shed many illusions.

One illusion is that winning this election will “take back control of our union.” It’s true: pro-worker leadership can give workers a voice inside the union. We can begin a real mobilization around our common interests, like improved healthcare and pension benefits, and confronting the school system’s racist segregation. But the ruling class is not about to allow workers to control unions.

Just this past February, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) removed its entire elected NYC leadership because they had been fighting for their workers’ needs. The AFT/UFT have been comfortably in the pocket of Democratic Party bosses for years, churning out votes and deceiving workers into supporting capitalism, while Democratic politicians without exception have presided over deteriorating conditions for workers’ standard of living and rising fascism, as they prioritize defending the declining U.S. empire as it gets increasingly outmaneuvered by rising imperialists China, Russia, and Iran.

Another dangerous illusion is that the courts will save us. It’s true that several court decisions have supported the retirees’ fight to maintain their present Medicare plans, based on promises enshrined in city law (laws that workers fought for!), but that will not stop City bosses—who are already appealing the latest decision—from going after workers’ healthcare benefits. Like the unions, the courts are controlled by the same capitalist bosses that EVERY SINGLE TIME will put bosses’ profits ahead of workers’ needs.

### Build a base in the working class

As this new leadership gets its footing, and as the coming union-wide election builds steam, communists in PLP and their allies are fighting for ideological leadership inside this growing movement. We are fighting for antiracism, antisexism, and multiracial unity, mobilizing long-marginalized paraprofessionals (who are more likely Black and Latin), forging bonds with in-service educators to fight for the needs of the students (the main targets of school bosses’ attacks).

We are building solidarity with workers in other city unions, who have seen through this healthcare struggle that we have common interests. We are struggling with workers to see that, at its root, it’s not just the privatization of our healthcare that is our enemy, it’s the capitalist system itself. Using CHALLENGE, study groups, and ties of friendship, we are building a base with these workers, trust forged in struggle for the future of our class, for our children and grandchildren, for workers power and a communist world.

## JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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## OUR FIGHT

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs every-one to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.

Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

## CONTACT US

Email: desafio.challenge@gmail.com  
Mail: Box 808 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202  
Internet: Online: www.plp.org  
Twitter: @PLPchallenge  
Facebook: @Challenge Desafio  
Instagram: @ PLPchallenge



### WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual. While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

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## Editorial

# Disasters made by capitalism

Within the last month, capitalist climate change helped create two torrential hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico. They left behind massive destruction and hundreds of deaths and injuries from Florida to Virginia—including the “climate haven” of Asheville, North Carolina, high in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Massive flooding drenched the Mexican states of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatan.

First Hurricane Helene claimed the lives of more than two hundred people in the southeastern U.S., becoming the deadliest U.S. storm since Katrina in 2005. Just two weeks later, Hurricane Milton and its dozens of tornadoes devastated Florida, killing at least 25 and wreaking incalculable damage to roads, highways, homes, and public services. It left three million people without electricity and thousands without access to drinking water.

While hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires are all natural phenomena, their recent frequency, intensity, and unpredictability are anything but “natural.” They are the direct results of global warming and greenhouse gas emissions, mostly carbon dioxide, that clog the Earth’s atmosphere. Carbon dioxide emissions are produced by the unchecked burning of oil, gas, and coal. Fossil fuels are the lifeblood of capitalist production and imperialist war machines, and the source of hundreds of billions of dollars in annual profits for rulers in the U.S., Europe, China, and Russia. The blood of the workers killed by the wave of recent storms is on the bosses’ hands.

The international working class can stop global warming—but only if we smash the selfish parasites who have caused it. The only solution to climate change is communist revolution

### Hot and getting hotter

Since 1880, around the advent of capitalist industrialization, the average temperature on Earth has risen by more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit. The last ten years have been the hottest in recorded history (climate.gov 1/18), and 2024 is on track to be the hottest of all.

Despite all the noise about clean energy and clean technology, each year sets a record for fossil fuel emissions. Given the relentless capitalist drive for maximum profit and sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry, that trend looks unlikely to reverse any time soon. Presidential candidate Kamala Harris recently bragged that she and Joe Biden had overseen “the largest increase in domestic oil production in history because...we cannot over-rely on foreign oil” (apnews.com, 9/13). For once, Harris wasn’t lying. In August, U.S. oil production rose to an all-time high of 13.4 million barrels per day (mercurynews.com, 10/13). This unchecked use of fossil fuels and resulting warmer ocean temperature made a storm of Helene’s size and intensity up to five hundred times more likely (Yale Climate Connections, 10/9).

In Ashville, North Carolina, a “climate haven” high in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Helene killed more than a hundred people; a hundred more are still missing (Forbes 10/15). In general, though, the worst climate carnage happens in places that are least responsible for carbon pollution—in such countries as Belize, Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Sudan, Madagascar, and Pakistan. The effects of global warming have created more than 20 million climate refugees since 2010 (https://climatechampions.unfccc, 6/21/21).

### Failing capitalist infrastructure

On top of making storms worse, capitalism has deepened the misery of the working class by failing to maintain basic infrastructure to control flooding. The bosses have compounded this crime by moving more and more workers into the most vulnerable areas. U.S. levees and flood control ponds, built to last no more than thirty years, are on average fifty years old (theconversation.com 5/10/2023). Infrastructure gets neglected because the world’s biggest capitalists are funneling trillions of dollars into their militaries to fight ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East—and to prepare for an ever more likely World War III.

Poorer workers have been pushed by unaffordable housing costs into homes built in cheaper flood zones. When the inevitable floods come, under-insured workers are forced to sell their homes at basement prices to

| The 8 Places Most Affected by Climate Change                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (UN World Food Program 4/21/2023)                                                                 |
| 1) South Sudan – Floods & Drought                                                                 |
| 2) Madagascar – Cyclones, Drought & Floods                                                        |
| 3) Pakistan – Floods                                                                              |
| 4) Somalia – Drought                                                                              |
| 5) Sudan – Drought & Floods                                                                       |
| 6) Chad – Drought and Floods                                                                      |
| 7) Sahel (Includes Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali) Drought, Wildfires & Floods                      |
| 8) The Dry Corridor (Includes El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) – Drought, Hurricanes & Floods |

developers, who then repeat the process while raking in massive profits (The Real Deal 7/30/2019).

### Harris and Trump: two fossil fuel stooges

With the U.S. presidential election looming, global warming promises to get worse regardless of who wins. It’s clear that neither Kamala Harris nor Donald Trump are willing or able to protect workers from the worsening climate crisis. Trump represents a camp of capitalists that owns domestic energy firms—his motto is “Drill, baby, drill.” Harris, a willing stooge of the multinational oil companies and the big banks that finance them, is even more dangerous. Whatever lip service she pays to climate action, she’s not about to bite the hand that feeds her. The main wing bosses she represents need fossil fuels for their bottom line and for the massive military that protects U.S. ruling-class interests around the globe. Harris understands who she’s working for. Like all bought-and-paid for politicians, her rhetoric is designed to mislead workers, but her policies will always serve her capitalist masters.

In 2020, Biden and Harris campaigned on a promise to end new leases for oil and gas production on protected federal lands. Since then, their administration has signed over six thousand new leases, surpassing the massive number cleared under Trump (Center for Biological Diversity, 1/24/23). The huge Willow project by ConocoPhillips in Alaska, approved by Biden, will do as much annual damage to the environment equal to two million gas-powered cars (NRDC, 11/13/2023).

### Save the planet with communist revolution!

There is no rational reason to power an economy with oil and gas. In addition to spawning super-storms and lethal floods, fossil fuel air pollution kills more than eight million workers a year (seas.harvard.edu, 2/9/21). Much of the technology to transition to clean energy already exists. What’s slowing it down is the profit system, and the bosses’ reliance on oil and gas to fight their wars.

The working class can do so much better. Stripped of the profit motive, a communist society would slash the use of fossil fuels because production would be based on the needs of the working class. We would use the sun, the wind, and nuclear energy. But as long as there is money to be made, the world won’t stop warming in time to prevent even more extreme weather events. For a safe and secure future, we must organize to smash capitalism.

There are two things we can do right now. One is to build solidarity among the working class to help the victims of these climate disasters around the world. In Florida and the Carolinas, workers are helping each other survive the latest capitalist nightmare. We can all be a part of this by going to our jobs and schools and organizing people to help with sending money and taking on the oil bosses. Whenever workers around the world are hurting, we should help them and fight for the working class.

The second thing—the most critical thing—is to build Progressive Labor Party and the movement for communist revolution. Only by ending production for profit can we build a society that serves the needs of the working class. Join us!

DC transit

Workers push back against cutbacks

WASHINGTON, DC, September 23 - "If we don't get it, Shut it down!" Over 100 workers demanded that the DC government keep their promises to the Circulator bus operators in ATU Local 689. The DC government is closing the Circulator, and Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members and friends urged our fellow workers to fight back by relying on their power over production. Relying on vicious budget-slashing Mayor Muriel Bowser or the slimy complicit City Council is a losing strategy. Two City Council members—Charles Allen and Brianne Nadeau—had the nerve to speak to the workers offering fantasy promises they'll never keep when the Circulator is shut down on September 30. They both voted to approve Bowser's budget that wiped out the \$40 million needed to pay for keeping Circulator routes! This racist attack will severely harm the Circulator's mainly Black workers and reduce transit access for D.C.'s majority Black worker population as well.

A PLP member, a past president of Local 689, roused the crowd when he detailed the politicians' history of racist lies and callous disregard of workers' lives. These politicians, as do all politicians, serve the capitalists. Their job is to fool us into believing that some of them serve the working class. It's all part of their electoral charade. Instead PLP members discussed job actions, strikes, and the need for communist revolution as they distributed CHALLENGE newspapers to protesters.

Mayor supports real estate profiteers as workers suffer

The history of the Circulator dates back to 2001 and broken promises by then-mayor Anthony Williams, the gentrifying real estate developers' best friend. Williams had advocated for downtown bus routes to be part of the public transit agency (WMATA, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Association) but then contracted the routes out to his class brother First Transit, a private company, later replaced by another contractor, RAPT Dev. The transit workers struggled with low pay and horrid working conditions but were organized by a PLP-led campaign into ATU 1764 in 2005. Still, as a small union local, it had



No to layoffs and capitalism; yes to a fair contract and communism

little leverage until it was brought into ATU 689, the larger regional union, three years ago.

PLP has had the back of Circulator drivers in strikes and battles for a fair contract. Comrades active in the ATU helped organize pre-strike rallies and marches for the 2022 strike and have been leading strike efforts in the greater Metro transit system for decades (see CHALLENGE 5/18/22). Now the workers' demand is that all the laid-off Circulator drivers be rehired by WMATA. The politicians are mouthing promises and offering a totally inadequate \$8-9 million to keep some workers on the new routes as they phase out the system.

Transit workers will win

As long as the capitalist bosses run society there is no such thing as a fair contract. We just have to

keep fighting. But Metro workers do have the power to shut down the city as they did for six days in 1978 with communist leadership. The Circulator struggle shows, though, however much we win, the bosses stand ready to snatch it back at a moment's notice, always taking their financial crises out of the hides of workers. The bosses have a contradiction to face: on one hand, they will cut transit jobs to preserve their stolen profits. On the other hand, they need transit workers to bring other workers to and from their jobs to have their labor exploited (though workers need transit for other uses as well). Therefore this is an attack on transit workers and the ridership!

It's time for transit workers to help build a revolutionary force to end the reign of the bosses and their politicians. Join the tried and tested Progressive Labor Party!

Hudson Valley

Teach-In exposes genocidal imperialists

Hudson Valley, NY—The growing anger of the 90-plus people at the Hudson Valley teach-in on Gaza was palpable as the audience listened to three organizers explain why the U.S. government unconditionally funds the Israel genocide in Gaza. Local organizers also inspired the audience with brief reports of their participation in demonstrations against local war manufacturers, a campaign to get a local city council to pass a ceasefire resolution, and student encampments at SUNY New Paltz and Rutgers University. After the formal program, the audience then met in small breakout groups to ask questions, share their own stories, and discuss how and what to do next.

Teaching importance of workers' solidarity is key

Members and friends of the Progressive Labor Party who are active in Jewish Voice for Peace, Middle East Crisis Response, and others, helped plan and organize the teach-in. We felt it was important to focus on the economic motivations behind the U.S.' unconditional support of Israel. Helping organize the teach-in gave us the opportunity to meet new people, a few of whom we were able to introduce to the Party as we emphasized the importance of building Jewish-Palestinian unity as a way to not just challenge the U.S. imperialist agenda in the region, but ultimately build more worker solidarity worldwide to smash genocidal bosses with communism.

"The reason for U.S. support goes back to resources, primarily fossil fuels, but also the need for trade routes, and economic and geopolitical control of the



region," said the first speaker, a retired doctor and organizer, who explained that "The U.S. is vying with China and its allies for world supremacy, and Israel is the only country in the region that the U.S. can count on as more Arab countries shift their allegiance away from the U.S." This is why the U.S. is not going to back down in its support of the genocide, which has already killed more than 40,000 people, injured tens of thousands more, and turned Gaza into a wasteland.

How do we stop the genocide?

After a second panelist spoke about the Israeli government propaganda apparatus, the final speaker

spoke about the resistance movement that has involved tens of thousands of people in the U.S. and the extent to which retaliation against those resisting the occupation has largely been centered in "liberal" media like the New York Times and CNN, in liberal-led cities like New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and at elite "liberal" universities like Columbia, NYU, and Harvard. The fact is that the "liberal" Biden/Harris administration has been the arms supplier to this genocidal war with the support of both political parties.

In the break-out group discussions following the three presentations, the common theme among the participants - which included students, community members, and workers - was "how can we get involved" and "what can we do to stop the genocide?"

After the teach-in a group of about a dozen of us went out for dinner to continue the discussion, and in some cases, make new friends. As the war has expanded to Lebanon in the past few weeks and the U.S. shells Yemen, it is more important than ever that we are immersed in the anti-war movement to carry out the struggle for internationalism over nationalism and for communist revolution. Working with new people as angry and determined as we are to oppose the genocidal foreign policies of the United States not only led to new friendships but also helped build our confidence that a revolutionary communist movement to end capitalism is possible. What is needed is to funnel our rage and energy into building the ultimate fighting force—a communist Party. Every worker, student, and soldier won to communist ideas represents a nail in the genocidal bosses coffin. Join PLP today!

H.S. fightback grows

# Curriculum mandate no fix for systemic racism

*This is a follow up article to the 6/19 CHALLENGE article "Pushback on the Bosses' Curriculum." The struggle against the new, mandated curriculum in New York City (NYC) schools continues with the leadership of teachers in Progressive Labor Party (PLP). Mayor Eric Adams, currently facing federal charges of bribery, wire fraud, conspiracy, and accepting illegal campaign contributions, the Department of Education (DOE), and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) are forcing this new curriculum as a way to control teachers and students. Under capitalism the education system is designed to indoctrinate students with capitalist ideas and mold them into obedient workers and soldiers. Standardized curriculums help them do that.*

Mayor Adams was the dream of the liberal fascists, a Black kkkop who had no problem decrying being left out of education due to his dyslexia and then subsequently slamming the door shut on the next generation of dyslexic Black kids coming behind him by imposing a one size fits all curriculum. Unfortunately, he got too obviously greedy by accepting lavish gifts and campaign contributions from foreign countries and hooking up his friends and family with city positions. Though it is enjoyable to see him get investigated, as communists we must remember that this is more about the rulers disciplining one member of their class to better carry out the needs of capitalism. It is not about making life better for the working class.

Struggle spreads

As the struggle at our high school escalated, the UFT shifted its message from collaboration with the district bosses to struggling for teacher autonomy. News of our fight reached the Chancellor's office. Even though we are just one out of over a thousand high schools, they are afraid of the struggle spreading further. The Assistant Principal (AP) lied to the Chancellor about how widespread dissent was amongst the teachers but our union leader shared a petition that showed how many teachers were united in this struggle.

This same AP is now asking teachers if there is any organizing going on against her in the department. Of course we are organizing. Communist leadership is being given at all levels of the struggle. In quick meetings in between periods and during shared lunches, the department has discussed the struggle and shaped goals. They have prioritized the needs of the students over the mandate.

Racist education fails Black students

Due to the racism inherent in capitalism, Black and Latin students are not achieving at the same rate. In some areas where there is a struggle against the mandate, Black students are being left out of the conversation. Many of the white and Asian students have tutors and use school to apply what they have already learned. But for many students, school is where they learn the skills and not just apply prior learning with the help of parents and tutors.

The Superintendent is trying to say that the mandated curriculum is going to help Black students to achieve higher on tests but this is a lie. No mandated curriculum can fix systemic inequality, especially when it alienates, oppresses, and kills the creativity of the teachers who plan directly for their students' needs. These curricula are specifically designed by corporations in order to meet the needs of a capitalist education system.

This struggle not only affects our jobs as teachers but also as parents to students in NYC schools. In a Parent Teacher Association meeting in an elementary school, the struggle against the new curriculum was discussed. Less time will be spent teaching math in second grade and below so that the students can be taught typing skills. This is so they can succeed in the timed standardized tests in third grade that are given on computers.

An important part of the struggle has been sharing CHALLENGE with more teachers. This has shifted the conversations from simply complaining about being told what to do by administration to understanding the importance of fighting for our students' needs and the importance of uniting with parents and students. So far our parent and student outreach needs to be strengthened. A single spark can start a fire and a single struggle with communist leadership can shake up the bosses' plans. We have a world to win and we need to be able to teach that to our students.

**CAPITALISM  
BREEDS SEXISM  
RACISM  
& IMPERIALISM!**



**FIGHT FOR A COMMUNIST  
WORLD  
BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL  
PLP!  
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY**

Newton, MA

## Palestinian & Jewish workers, fight Zionist genocide

**NEWTON, MA, September 29**— In Newton today, Progressive Labor Party demonstrated and leafleted against Israeli Zionist genocide in Gaza, and against the Zionist who shot anti-genocide protester Caleb Gannon in Newton on September 12. Standing up to such attacks is critical, and inspires other antiracist fighters.

By our discipline, a careful plan, and commitment to fighting Zionist genocide, we overcame some initial fears, and sent the message that Zionist intimidation will not be tolerated.

Fighting Zionist terror head on

In heavily Jewish Newton, we got a very positive response. "Thank you for doing this!" "I'm very glad to see you here." "I'm totally with you." People in cars stopped to grab our leaflets, and honked support for our signs. A smaller number were overtly hostile or made threats.

Caleb's shooting is part of an escalating pattern of attacks pursued by Zionists in the Boston area. It includes attacks on college students who protested the mass bombings of the civilian population in Gaza, attacks on college professors and administrators that refused to support Israeli government fascism, and the attempt to label anyone that criticizes Israel as anti-Semitic. Even more, the media has basically ignored the story of Matthew Nelson who in an extreme act of protest against the genocide, committed self-immolation in front of Boston's Israeli consulate on September 11 (Cape Cod Times, 9/25). We offer con-



dolences to Matthew's family and friends.

Students and workers need to build a multiracial, mass movement for an egalitarian communist society. We must unite Jewish, Palestinian and all work-

ers to defeat Zionism, anti-Semitism and nationalism and reject all capitalists, whether Israeli rulers or Hamas. If we must fight a war, let it be to eliminate capitalism and build an egalitarian world.

# Bangladesh crisis

## No good bosses in a capitalist system



*Masses of workers and students oust dictator Hasina; the general and U.S. and Chinese imperialists also must go*

On August 5th the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina resigned. Hasina was forced out by a mass uprising initially led by students, that then spread across the country in response to the government trying to violently suppress the demonstrations. The regime had long lost the popular mandate to rule, had lost the battle of narratives and finally had lost the streets. By the evening of August 5th, a few hours after Hasina had resigned and fled to India, rampaging mobs attacked and torched every symbol of the regime in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh.

### Workers' rage needs communist direction

The fall of Hasina came from a combination of mass anger of workers and students taking to the streets and showing once again the power of the working class. At the same time the lack of political direction of the mass movement has allowed the situation to be used to benefit different ruling class factions in Bangladesh who are no better than Hasina, as well as the Chinese imperialists. This is a lesson that keeps getting repeated. A workers movement, no matter how militant, must be led by class conscious ideas to benefit the working class. Ultimately only a communist movement can free the working class from the boss' dictatorship. That's because workers then run all aspects of society.

Since the fall of the brutal dictator on August 5th, the winners appear to be the Bangladesh military which is firmly in control of the government, the Chinese imperialists who were unhappy with the discord under Hasina and the fundamental Islamist parties who were suppressed by the Awami League (Economist 8/10). None of these forces will be good for the working class in Bangladesh.

The politics of the mass student movement which started the uprising has been muddled as a wide range of factions joined in for their own purposes. The initial movement against the restoring of patronage in government job quotas for the ruling party was seized

on by the Islamist students. This movement is friendly with Pakistan and the opposition party movements who see a chance to gain power and are likely more connected to China (Stratfor.com, 8/9).

### Chinese bosses' exploit racism

The Chinese imperialists have steadily increased their presence in Bangladesh, with there now being over 700 Chinese companies and \$1.4 billion in investment. This money has increased and acted in unison with rising anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh (orcachuna.org, 2/5), a common theme of the anti-Hasina movement. Already, just since the fall of Hasina, there has been an increase in attacks against Hindu workers in Bangladesh (AP 8/13).

Few could have foreseen this turn of events in 2008, when Hasina's party, the Awami League, won a landslide victory in an election that recorded the highest voter turnout in Bangladesh's electoral history. Yet, in the 15 years following that election, Hasina unleashed a reign of terror that is unparalleled in the recent history of Bangladesh.

Every institution in the country – the police, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the universities, the chambers of commerce, the labor unions and even her own Awami League Party – was hollowed out and placed in firm control of bureaucrats and politicians loyal to Hasina. The state institutions were then used to crush any last vestige of political opposition in the country and to financially benefit Hasina's inner circle. Political dissidents and opposition organizers disappeared in the hundreds, as they were detained, tortured for years or murdered in secret prisons – the "Aaynaghar" or "the room of mirrors." Financial corruption reached such ludicrous proportions that one of Hasina's personal assistants was alleged to have amassed 34 million dollars in kickbacks before he fled the country.

And yet, the Awami League won three national elections – in 2013, 2018 and 2024 – essentially uncontested and without any major political crisis.

Hasina's political propaganda rested on three main arguments. First – the Awami League was the rightful political heir of the freedom fighters (the "Muktijoddha"), while the opposition was a coalition of groups who historically opposed the struggle or tried to subvert it – the "Rajakar", as she would disdainfully refer to them. The imposing statues of Sheikh Mujib and the celebration of the liberation struggle therefore became symbols of political legitimacy for the regime. The second argument was that the Awami League was the only party capable of keeping the right-wing Islamist extremists from power. This was cynically linked to the physical security of the religious minorities, safeguarding of their property and places of worship. The third argument was that the country could prosper economically only under Sheikh Hasina's leadership. The government undertook mega-projects to drive the point home, even when the economic logic for such projects was highly dubious.

### The limitations of student protests

This well-rehearsed narrative, aided by a brutal state machinery worked well for a while. However, months before her final uncontested election, it was becoming increasingly clear that Hasina was losing the battle of narratives, both at home and abroad, in trying to justify the brutality of the police state against all forms of political dissent. A depressed economic outlook post-pandemic, aggravated by a slew of bad economic decisions, didn't help either.

It was at this historical juncture that the student protests exploded. The Awami League deployed its standard playbook with the police massacring hundreds of protestors, critically injuring and abducting many thousands. As the repression increased over the days and the weeks, a fractured political opposition came together and ultimately ousted Hasina. What happens going forward is still difficult to predict, but without a revolutionary communist movement led by the working class, one capitalist faction or another will continue the brutal oppression of workers in Bangladesh.

# LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

## Workers’ anger has entered the chat

In my department in the New York City Transit system, overtime has slowed down dramatically over the past seven months. Workers are upset. Workers rely on overtime (OT) mainly because our pay doesn't keep up with inflation, or match what Metro North or Long Island Rail Road is getting when we move more people. We end up having to work on our days off and 4-6 hours extra on another day then 1 or 2 overnights. This was standard for us, but since the work stopped coming we could only expect one day of OT. That's if they didn't cancel it all together.

We recently had overtime that was canceled. This is the conversation that took place in the chat through text message:

Boss: They dont require assistance from us, no overtime.

Johnson: face palm emoji

Brown: vomit emoji

Johnson: this some 🤢🤢!!!! We've been flim-flammed, bamboozled, led by a stray, run a muck!

Me: yea, the s\*\*\*'s f\*\*\*d up. This is what happens when we don't control our OT. Another department has OT scheduled in their bids. Something to think about...

Diaz: Sounds like that should be said at a union meeting

Me: sure wanna come?

Diaz: We all free Saturday, let's mob out to the union building

WHO'S WITH ME!!!!!!!

Me: Lol sounds good but I don't think anyone's there on sat.

Boss: sends emoji of angry trucks blowing steam.

Me: Shout out to the port workers (fist)

Charlie: I'm not a man of many words, but I guarantee you that if I got back into the Union, I would fight for you. We can't even get good drinking water. Now, we are signing up for fake canvassing.

I've been on the front lines for 30 years plus. We have to speak up and be recognized.

Diaz: another area got round the clock OT, every weekend

Johnson: EVERYONE ELSE IS EATING!

Me: Not only that but it's affecting our area of work that is badly in need of repairs. Are sections rotting?

Don: it is what it is.

Private message from Johnson:

Yo, talk to the other guys and have someone open a new feed exclusively for us track workers. The one we are on has the boss in it. We don't need the office to know what we are doing? They can know how we feel, though. But they don't need to know our plans.

Me: Facts. Thanks for your leadership.

(I made a new chat)

Johnson: OK fellaz this is exclusively a worker feed. No supervision. We can safely and discreetly communicate here.

Diaz: Stop doing so much work in a straight time.

Me: for some of us we just need to do the bare min so that there isn't a derailment.

But I am concerned about the conditions the city is in. I just feel like the bosses don't care about us or the riders that can be in danger due to the conditions.

Diaz: That's a fact

They feel we can get all the work done in a straight time..

Do an emergency 4 hours OT here and there when they need to. Cut the productivity & they'll have no choice! What's the motivation right now to give them a certain amount of work in a straight time? Besides a pat on the back & signing a fake canvas

Me: The union sucks in the pockets of the bosses so is there anything else we could do?

Charlie: Now that we realize what's going on, let's stop playing ball and get the Union involved. Give something to work with by stopping signing the fake canvases and actually showing up at a union meeting. We are the union, it's up to us to act. Force the union to work on our behalf. We pay dues

Me: next one in 2 weeks

This is small, but the fight is there. Trying to make the connections to show them the unity we should have with the riding public. I also wanted to encourage leadership and see how they felt about the current union playing both sides. The struggle for workers’ power continues! Read about what happens in the union meeting in the next issue of CHALLENGE.

## Anti-fascist organizing in Bushwick

Dear CHALLENGE readers. World War 3 is waiting in the wings in the Middle East. U.S. elections are fast approaching. Whether Trump wins (which he might) or Harris, Black and brown immigrants are at the front of the fascist line-up as scapegoats/targets. The fascist anti-immigrant movement has been and is being mobilized. Are we and our friends in the Progressive Labor Party aware, courageous and prepared? In the Bushwick community in Brooklyn PLP is taking small steps. We have distributed 500 PLP leaflets titled “From Springfield to Palestine.” We displayed two pro-immigrant/anti racist posters in Spanish and English in the street. We taped the posters to the wall in the immigrant community group where we’re members. We’re getting signatures from members at the organization to send in solidarity to Haitian immigrants in Springfield. We’re reaching out to friends in other immigrant organizations to display the posters. And finally we’re in the midst of planning to lead a forum at our organization to build multi-racial, international unity and working class fightback in this period. As we proceed we plan to deepen PLPer’s ties to old friends and make new friends. It is crucial to build and

## Glossary

Capitalists compete by any means necessary. Much like smaller criminal gangs, different groups of capitalists battle one another to secure territory, resources, and exploitable labor—the basis of their profits.They have created the state as a mechanism to manage and protect this ruthless profit-driven system. Through laws, police, prisons, elections, the military, schools, the media, and other institutions, the bosses have built a dictatorship to keep themselves in power—and keep the working class out of power.

**Fascism** is a stage of late capitalism in crisis where the liberal democratic veil peels away to reveal a rotting dictatorship. The bosses use state terror to discipline their own class and enforce compliance by the working class—both essential conditions for waging global war. Fascism is marked by more direct and centralized rule, with intensified racism, sexism, and nationalism.

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalists, principally the multinational banks and oil companies (JPMorganChase, ExxonMobil). They’re trying to build a multiracial, patriotic coalition to back U.S. imperialism and protect their far-flung profits. This is the wing that plays the drums of World War III.

The Small Fascists are mostly domestically oriented capitalists, spearheaded by the Koch, Mercer, DeVos, and Coors families, along with Richard Mellon Scaife, Harry and Lynde Bradley, John Olin, Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, Rupert Murdoch and a cast of other billionaires. They want to cut taxes for short-term profits and are reluctant to invest in costly ground wars to defend the global U.S. empire. Their agenda includes a racist gutting of social services at home and a retreat from U.S. imperialist alliances, including NATO.

strengthen the revolutionary communist PLP!

## Racist mask bans hurt workers

I was very pleased to see the article on Mask Bans. As the author states, opposing mask bans connects many different issues together. Mask bans repress dissension and increase racism since cops are more likely to stop Black and Latin people, a new kind of ‘stop and frisk.’ As stated, bans also hurt people with health conditions and those who want to prevent them. Masking is an effective barrier to the transmission of Covid, flu, and other airborne infections. They are even more important now as the government withdraws its funding of vaccines and medications for the covid. That’s a death sentence for many, especially low income, Black, Latin, and older people.

Covid protection is a political issue. Our anti-war, antiracist, and revolutionary organizations must fight for life-saving solutions and lead by example to require safe behaviors at our gatherings and within our schools, workplaces, and conferences. We can’t afford to lose any comrades.

## Rest in power

# Derek, a working-class jewel

Last month we lost a dear comrade, Derek Pearl. Derek was many things to many people during his 87 years. In the jewelry trade he was known as an excellent gem setter and union militant. In the steel mills of Pittsburgh he was known as an expert welder-fitter and an antiracist. As a high school teacher of jewelry making and then social studies he was known for siding with his students. But to all workers, students and bosses he was known to have a deep love for the working class and implacable hatred for the capitalist class: he was known as a fighter and a communist. He was also a singer, a good dancer, and a lot of fun to be with.

Born to a working class Jewish family in England in 1937, his early childhood was dominated by WWII. Derek’s family spent most of the war in a northern English seaside town. Back in London, he was forced to leave school just under the age of 16. He appren-

ticed in gem-setting, then served an obligatory stint in the British Royal Air Force. When he got out he wanted to travel the world. In New York City he met Rita who became his wife of 60 years and they had two sons and now five grandchildren.

## Union organizer joins Progressive Labor Party (PLP)

He worked in the jewelry trade as a diamond setter, developing a deep hatred of all kinds of unfairness. He had a way with people, an empathy with other workers of all ages, races and nationalities. He and Rita got to know the mostly Latin grinders and polishers working in that factory and built a strong relationship with them and their families. They elected him shop steward and he led strikes for better conditions. He was expelled from the union for leading a wildcat strike but he won his way back in and became a labor

law precedent (Pearl vs. Tarantola). During this time he and Rita joined the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and began to get a deeper understanding of the capitalist system they were already fighting.

In 1975 the Pearls were asked to move to Pittsburgh to help lead the Party there. There he learned welding and worked in two different steel fabricating plants where he met much racism but was also very proud of the work he helped produce - massive doors for a dam in South America, doors for blast furnaces, and molding forms for the concrete in the Washington D.C. subway.

Derek and family moved back to NYC in 1981 as heavy industry in the Pittsburgh area declined and along with thousands of other workers, he was laid

*Continued on page 7*

# Rest in power

## Derek, a working-class jewel

Continued from page 6

*O, the world is overburdened  
With the idle and the rich!  
They bask up in the sunshine  
While we plod in the ditch;  
But, zounds! We'll but some  
mettle  
In their fingers and their  
thumbs,  
For we'll turn things upside  
down, my mates  
When the Revolution comes!  
- The opening verse in We'll  
Turn Things upside down  
By J. Bruce Glasier (1859-  
1920) (words updated  
in 2009) one of Derek's  
favorite songs to sing. For full  
lyrics visit [www.plp.org](http://www.plp.org)*



Derek Pearl: a lifelong communist who liked “a little giggle” in his life

off. He began working once again in jewelry production in New York. In 1984 he made contact with British coal miners during their historic strike, winning some of them to the Party and spearheading support for the strike in the U.S.

Derek got his teaching certificate for vocational education in jewelry and welding in 1986. When NYC closed down vocational courses Derek got a B.S. degree at the age of 65 so he could teach history and economics. He got his M.S. degree at the age of 72 - just as he retired.

### Militant antiracist fighter slugs klan

Over the years, Derek led and participated in many fights against racism. From the Astoria fight that stomped the White People's Party, to helping lead the security squad that ran uphill to fight and scatter the gutter racists so that the Boston May Day march could take place, to stopping fledgling attempts by the Klan to organize in the Pittsburgh area, to helping organize the May Day March to integrate Marquette Park in Chicago (that park had been dominated and segregated by the American Nazi party). In 1999 Derek along with other comrades made headline news by flinging themselves through police lines

to attack a group of klansmen who dared to march in New York City, Afterwards, students welcomed him back to his school as a hero.

### Antiracist community organizer in Brooklyn

During the 1980s and 1990s Derek was also deeply involved in community organizing. A hospital worker and comrade lived in a Flatbush building that had drug deals occurring in the lobby. Together, he, Derek, Rita and others organized a tenants association that took back the building, taking control of building from drug infestation, and forcing the landlord to make much needed repairs. For years May Day buses left from the front of that building with a hefty contingent coming from within.

In his last years, Derek suffered several health problems and went through a gradual decline until he passed in September. We'll miss you comrade. We'll miss your fightback, your humor and your songs. Your communist life was a light in the lives of thousands of workers and students.

# Bolshevik Revolution: Workers seized power

Continued from page 8

Nazi troops found total destruction and desolation in every captured city or town — the “scorched earth” policy. As Soviet defenders retreated, they destroyed everything that the Nazi's might use. The communists then organized armed resistance behind enemy lines: the Partisans.

Over 6,000 factories were dismantled and moved east of the Ural Mountains, re-assembled to produce weapons again, a feat requiring total unity and support of Soviet workers, unmatched by any country, before or since. Soviet soldiers and workers fought for Stalingrad block-by-block, house-by-house and room-by-room to halt the “unbeatable” Nazi invaders. Workers in arms factories produced weapons 24 hours a day for the Red Army, working 12-hour shifts. When Nazi troops captured factories, heroic Soviet workers and soldiers would re-take them.

The entire German Sixth Army and 24 of Hitler's generals were surrounded and killed or captured in the battle of Stalingrad. Never again would the Nazis mount a successful offensive against the Red Army. Stalingrad was truly the turning point of the Second World War. Not until the Nazis were on the run following their defeats at Stalingrad and in the Battle of the Kursk — the biggest armored battle in world history, involving millions of soldiers and 6,000 tanks — did the U.S.-U.K. forces invade Western Europe.

It was the communist-led Soviet Union that smashed the Nazis, the largest and most powerful army ever mounted by a capitalist power.

All this was accomplished under the leadership of Josef Stalin. No wonder he is reviled to this day by world capitalism.

### Lessons learned

Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks

suffered from many political weaknesses, which led to the return of capitalism to the Soviet Union. From the beginning they believed that to achieve communism, first socialism had to be established, a belief Karl Marx had advanced. We have learned from that experience that socialism retained capitalism's wage system and therefore failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system. Socialism put forward material incentives to the working class rather than political ones as the way to win workers to communism. We must win masses of workers to abolish capitalism's entire wage system and fight directly for communism.

Today, no country is led by communists, but this is a temporary historical setback. While this long and volatile era of widening imperialist wars and fascist attacks on the working class is upon us, every dark night has its end.

The Progressive Labor Party is a product of both the old international communist movement and the struggle against its weaknesses. Pseudo-leftist groups have not learned history's lessons and continue to fight for nationalist “sharing of power” with capitalists, a la Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, not for the working-class seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Our movement is daily fighting to learn from the Soviet Union's great battles and achievements as well as its deadly errors that led to its collapse, mainly that reformism, racism, nationalism and all forms of concessions to capitalism only lead workers to defeat. Give the ruling class an inch and they'll grab a mile.

We honor the bold fight by the workers of the Bolshevik Revolution against capitalism and for a working-class communist world. Today, we must organize workers, students and soldiers to build a mass worldwide working class party that will turn this era of imperialist wars into a new, international communist revolution.



## RED EYE ON THE NEWS ...

### U.S. undergoes massive nuclear weapons modernization program

New York Times, 10/10-To understand how America is preparing for its nuclear future, follow Melissa Durkee's fifth-grade students as they shuffle into Room 38... One by one, the children settle in for a six-week course taught by an atypical educator, the defense contractor General Dynamics... The U.S. Navy has put in an order for General Dynamics to produce 12 nuclear ballistic missile submarines by 2042 — a job that's projected to cost \$130 billion...The coursework ...welding crackers together with Easy Cheese to create mini-submarines — is one small facet of the much bigger preparations America is making for a historic struggle with its nuclear rivals. With Russia at war, China escalating regional disputes and nations like North Korea and Iran expanding their nuclear programs, the United States is set to spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion over 30 years to revamp its own arsenal...The federal government has said little about the plan in public, outside of congressional hearings and strategy papers, or the vast amount being spent. There has been no significant debate. The billion-

dollar programs move under the radar.

### A genocide within a genocide in Northern Gaza

Al Jazeera, 10/13-A senior Palestinian diplomat to the United Nations has sounded alarm over Israel's ongoing siege of northern Gaza, in which hundreds of Palestinians have been killed over the last week and hundreds of thousands of civilian residents are either trapped or ordered to flee amid intense bombardment ... 400,000 Palestinians are trapped in northern Gaza, with the Israeli military not allowing anyone to leave the area despite issuing an evacuation order. “What's happening now is a continuation of the genocidal acts that began a year ago,” he said, adding that more than 70 bodies are still on the streets, with civil defense workers unable to retrieve them because of relentless Israeli attacks ... “The occupation is blowing up roads and destroying residential districts. People can't find anything to eat. They are trapped inside their homes, fearing bombs could fall onto their heads.”

### Interimperialist competition trumps

### international legal bodies

Foreign Affairs, 10/7-For over 75 years, the multilateral trading system has helped ensure stability and order in the global economy. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO), brought states together to cooperate in lowering tariffs and other trade barriers, promoting global economic integration and establishing rules to govern trade ... But now this liberal trading order is in crisis. International cooperation on trade has largely broken down. The United States, the longtime champion of open markets, has abandoned its commitment to free trade, multilateral cooperation, and respect for the rule of law. By imposing tariffs and providing massive subsidies across multiple industrial sectors, Washington has openly violated the WTO's rules and principles. China has likewise distorted and increasingly weaponized trade through its own use of subsidies and economic coercion ... Many other countries are increasingly following the United States' lead ... to openly defy WTO rules.

“law enforcement” patrols close to Taiwan's offshore islands

# BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION: WORKERS SEIZED POWER



*Read Lenin's classic Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism to understand today's imperialist rivalries and wars*

One hundred and five years ago, November 7, 1917, marked the beginning of the single most important event of the 20th century, the Bolshevik Revolution, which directly inspired the Chinese Revolution and anti-imperialist struggles around the world from Vietnam to Africa to Latin America.

**The working class seized power under the leadership of the Bolsheviks**

Russia's working class, headed by the revolutionary communists of the Bolshevik Party and its leader, Vladimir Lenin, freed one-sixth of the world's surface from capitalism. They proved once and for all that it was possible to strive for a world without exploitation, where those who produce all value, the working class, can enjoy the fruits of their labor and not have it stolen by a few parasitical bosses and their lackeys.

The Bolshevik Revolution was the first serious attempt by workers and peasants to seize, hold and consolidate state power. Even though capitalism has returned to the former Soviet Union, workers will not forget that the Soviet working class defeated capitalism in 1917. They smashed the imperialist armies of 17 countries (including Japan, the U.S., Britain, France, among others) which invaded Russia in 1918 to try to crush the revolution. They freed the masses, especially women, from the yoke of capitalist, feudal and religious oppression. And then in 1945 the Soviet Red Army defeated the mightiest and most barbaric army the capitalists had ever organized: the Nazi Wehrmacht.

The revolution frightened the world's bosses, who immediately sent armies from 17 countries to try—in

Churchill's words—to "strangle it in the cradle." From 1918 to 1923, millions of workers led by the Red Army defeated the imperialists' counter-revolution. Nearly five million died in that battle, many of whom were the most committed workers the revolution had produced. Lenin himself died because of injuries inflicted by a hired killer.

The masses showed great courage and determination to defend and build their revolution, under the leadership of their revolutionary party. They proved that revolutionary violence on the part of the working class and peasantry was vital to the seizure of state power.

**Achievements of the Bolshevik Revolution**

The Bolshevik Revolution brought the Soviet Union to heights of productive development that capitalism, given a similar time period and circumstances, could never have dreamed of. Bringing the working class to power, the Revolution coordinated their social-economic efforts for the production and exchange of the necessities, the comforts and even some luxuries of life, making them available to all. The Soviet system of production was for use, not for profit. This can only be accomplished by abolishing capitalist profits and the private ownership of property, with its exploitation, poverty, unemployment, racism, fascism and imperialist wars.

In the 1930s, when the entire capitalist world sank into depression, and tens of millions worldwide were left jobless and starving (much like today), the Soviet Union was forging ahead building a new society with-

out unemployment. They created some measure of a decent life for workers in an incredibly short time, transforming a 90 percent illiteracy rate into one in which nearly everyone was literate.

Around 1938, without any official declaration, the Soviet Union had achieved the era of free bread. One could enter a cafeteria, order little or nothing, and receive all the bread one wanted. You needed, you received. Even during a drive for heavy industry, living standards rose strikingly when the rest of the world was mired in the Great Depression.

The Soviet Union not only freed workers but also fought against racism and sexism. The battle against racism was particularly significant. As communist Paul Robeson said about his trips to the Soviet Union, he "felt like a human being for the first time since I grew up. Here I am not a Negro but a human being. Before I came I could hardly believe that such a thing could be.... Here, for the first time in my life, I walk in full human dignity."

**Heroic fight against the Nazis**

In 1941, the bosses again tried to destroy the revolution. Hitler, using all of Europe's resources and the largest military machine ever assembled, invaded the Soviet Union with four million troops. They discovered the Soviets were no pushover as had occurred in Western Europe. Hitler's prediction — endorsed by western military "experts" — of capturing Moscow in six weeks went up in smoke.

*Continued on page 7*

**WRITE FOR CHALLENGE!**

CHALLENGE strives to be the communist paper for and by the international working class. We call on all readers, supporters, and comrades to submit class struggle articles, analytical pieces, original photos and graphics, letters, and political cartoons.

**The next deadline is night of Friday, October 25**

Send to [desafio.challenge@gmail.com](mailto:desafio.challenge@gmail.com). For some guidance and house style rules, please go to [www.bit.ly/338ZJow](http://www.bit.ly/338ZJow)

All submissions are open to collective discussion, struggle, and change. See sidebar on page 2 about fighting for collectivity and against a cult of the individual.

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